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ABSTRACT

The history of the efforts of the U.S. Congress to obtain evaluation data and reports for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I, projects is one of delay and frustration. Prior to the 1974 amendments to the ESEA, evaluation was negligible, not clearly defined, and not comparable across school districts. The Education Amendments of 1974, Section 151, includes specific instructions to the Commissioner of Education to develop models for evaluation and to report annually to Congress on the findings, so that Congress would have a basis for decision making. State and local evaluations shall be emphasized. The Commissioner is to develop a system for the identification of exemplary programs; several additional specifications are mentioned. Although some think that Congressional decisions are generally politically motivated, such reports as the National Institute of Education (NIE) study of compensatory education may have considerable impact on the actions of Congress. The NIE study has been initiated in response to Section 821 of the Education Amendments of 1974, which expresses Congressional concern over the lack of data evaluating Title I programs. (CTM)

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Title I Evaluation--A Case Study in Congressional Frustration

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Before beginning an examination of the RMC models for the evaluation of Title I, it might be instructive to spend a few moments looking at the history of how Section 151, which contains the requirement that the Office of Education develop evaluation models, came into existence.

As has been noted, Section 151 was a part of the Education Amendments of 1974. What has gone relatively unnoticed by most researchers in the field is how that provision came into existence. If one examines the hearings for the Education Amendments of 1973, which became the Education Amendments of 1974 (Public Law 93-380), one will find a number of instances where witnesses before either the House or Senate Committees were asked specific information as to the impact of Title I. In many cases it was simply impossible to provide that information.

In many other instances the hearing record is full of page after page of evaluation data--little of it comparable from one witness to the next. For example, during a hearing on February 6, 1973, Dr. Richard Gosha, Superintendent of Schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, appeared before the General Education Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Carl D. Perkins. During questioning following Dr. Gosha's testimony, Rep. David Towell, a Republican freshman Congressman from Nevada, entered into the following dialogue with Dr. Gosha.

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Mr. Towell: "One other question. You did mention to the Chairman that you did have some information about the result of the program which is fine. Programs obviously have been going on long enough now that if a child is in a program for a year or two, had there been any ongoing studies that followed those children, what they have done four or five years later."

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Dr. Gosha: "I would not know. I don't think that in our city we have any real substantial follow-up over a period of time with youngsters. I would add that I think we are approaching that point now where that kind of data could be gathered."

Mr. Towell: "I'm sure the Committee and you gentlemen would be interested in that because we are spending nationally quite a bit of money on it and more than just immediate result. I think sometimes we have to look a little farther into the future. While we may say the program is great, it probably is helping somebody on an immediate basis. If that falls off back where we started from five years later we have spent a lot of money for nothing. So, I hope that not only Milwaukee but some other places around the nation will start to make some follow-through studies."

When Congress began considering the extension of ESEA Title I on January 31, 1973, some $10 billion had already been appropriated for that program. Eight years had passed since the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Congress was beginning to feel that it was now time for these programs to prove that they had accomplished at least some of what had been promised by sponsors of the legislation back in the mid-1960s. Title I was obviously the program which received the most attention since most school districts relied heavily on Title I funding and 90 percent of all LEAs received some Title I dollars. Title I, of course, had also been the centerpiece of the Johnson War on Poverty legislation.

Given the time that had elapsed and the dollars which had been spent, it is understandable, therefore, that the Congress exhibited a

great deal of frustration during those 1973 and 1974 hearings over the lack of specific data and information which it could use to make decisions on the continuation or modification of the program. For example, one of the rather major debates during that period was whether or not a specific percentage of Title I funds should be set aside for basic skills. Incredibly enough, both the sponsors and opponents of that provision found that almost no data existed on how much money from the Title I allocation was at that time being used for basic skills. There were some sketchy data available from some states but nothing was available on a national basis. What was available suffered from a lack of definition.

This is not to say that the information was not available in many school districts. The problem was that the data was collected in such a way that information was not comparable between and among school districts and could not be assembled on even a state basis.

Because of the lack of this information, a little known Republican Member of the House who had served for a term on the Education and Labor Committee became the author of Section 151 out of which grew the RMC models. That gentleman was Rep. Victor Veysey of California. Rep. Veysey was strongly committed to education, having served as Chairman of the Senate Education Committee in the California State Legislature in the late 1960s. As Chairman, Rep. Veysey had sponsored a number of bills dealing with the evaluation of educational programs. When Title I began to move through the Committee and subsequently reached the House Floor, he began to be concerned about the lack of good available information on Title I. Working with a few people from HEW and

Rep. Albert Quie, the ranking Republican on the Education and Labor Committee, he worked out an amendment which was offered on the House Floor on March 26, 1974, and was accepted by the House without any real debate and without a vote. Here is how the discussion went in the House on that afternoon:

"Mr. Veysey. Mr. Chairman, the amendment is a bit technical, but I think I can explain it very readily to you.

"It is an amendment to guarantee that there will be evaluation of the educational effectiveness of the programs which would be funded under this legislation.

"We stand here in a very perplexing position, I think, in the House of Representatives after 7 years of ESEA programs and after over $10 billion of Federal money have been expended on them. We do not know at this point which of the programs have accomplished effective improvement of education and which of them have not really succeeded at all.

"Mr. Chairman, according to Federal statutes, projects funded by title I of ESEA are supposed to be evaluated at all levels of program administration--local, State, and Federal. At the very best, we have only fragmented data to justify a request to extend title I for an additional 3 years. The U.S. Office of Education has assumed the blame for the inadequate execution of the congressional mandate, citing a lack of direction in describing to the States the data and methodology required for evaluation.

"It is unacceptable for this to continue. No doubt there have been highly successful programs, and we should know about

them. No doubt there have been abysmal failures. This we should know, also. The Education and Labor Committee has recognized the problem, but in my opinion, they have not gone far enough to rectify the problem. I believe my amendment will provide the Office of Education with the appropriate guidelines, so that in 1977 when we again return to the task of reviewing the authorization for ESEA, we will have adequate data to determine whether taxpayers' moneys are being spent wisely to improve the quality of education for our children.

"Specifically, my amendment will require that the administrator at each level of the programs funded by title I include a statement in the request for authorization describing the goals to be achieved and the criteria by which the success of the program will be measured. In other words, we must identify concrete objectives and measure the success in attaining these objectives if we are to know whether compensatory education programs are serving to improve the quality of education for any given group of children.

"My amendment will require the Commissioner of Education to develop models for the evaluation of each program and report annually to the Congress on the findings of the evaluation studies. This provision will provide the uniformity that has been lacking by providing the Congress with a better insight into the needs of compensatory education. At the same time, it will alert the Office of Education to the fact that annual evaluations can no longer be neglected. By 1977 the appropriate congressional committees will have three annual reports that will provide adequate data to justify

either a renewal of the existing programs or a complete revamping of the formulas for subsidizing compensatory education.

"Today, Mr. Chairman, we have to make a very difficult and embarrassing decision as to how to continue these programs absent evaluation information.

"My amendment will assure as well as we can that there will be uniform methods of evaluation of all of these programs throughout the Nation. Models will be promulgated by the U.S. Office of Education with local participation as to the criteria that would be used to evaluate these programs and the results will come back to the Congress so that 1 year from now we will begin to get information as to what we have really done and which programs have succeeded and which have failed. (Emphasis added)

"I want to improve education with these funds--not just spend the money. Join me in adding this clear directive to the legislation so that we will not again have to consider renewal of title I without knowing what results we are buying.

"Mr. Kemp. Will the gentleman yield?

"Mr. Veysey. I will be glad to yield to the gentleman from New York.

"Mr. Kemp. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

I want to rise in support of the amendment offered by the gentleman and I also heartily subscribe to what the gentleman is attempting to do to bring accountability to our spending programs and education legislation. I very much appreciate his leadership on this issue both when he served on the Education and Labor Committee and now that he is on Appropriations Committee.

"This is an issue which is so very important to the success of education in this country. The gentleman has made a substantive effort on behalf of ESEA legislation as well as a great effort to help restore a sound fiscal policy so vital to the future of America.

"(Mr. Kemp asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

"Mr. Bell. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

"Mr. Veysey. I am glad to yield to my colleague from California.

"Mr. Bell. I also wish to commend the gentleman for his amendment. It is a very good amendment, and we accept it on this side.

"Mr. Perkins. Mr. Chairman, I see no objection to the gentleman's amendment. As far as I am concerned, it is acceptable.

"Mr. Veysey. I thank my colleagues for their approval and ask for the approval of the House. Let me make it clear that it is my intent that local educational agencies be consulted by the Commissioner, cooperate with the Commissioner and participate in every way to establish meaningful procedures to determine the effectiveness of the diverse programs funded under title I.

"The Chairman. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. Veysey) to the committee substitute.

"The amendment to the committee substitute was agreed to." (Emphasis added.)

As you will note from this exchange, Rep. Veysey was concerned not only with the lack of good data on what Title I had accomplished but he also wanted to establish the precedent that Title I would receive good evaluation in the future so that by the time the Congress next considered the Act, a fair amount of data would be on hand so that Congress could make rational decisions. (It might be noted here that an evaluation section had been included in the Emergency School Aid Act, enacted in 1972. The author of that provision was then Senator, now Vice President Walter Mondale of Minnesota. So one sees between the Emergency School Aid Act and Title I that concern for evaluation is bipartisan and bicameral.)

A careful reading of Section 151 will show a considerable emphasis on the need for state and local evaluations. As a matter of fact, very little language is given to national evaluations.

"PROGRAM EVALUATION

"Sec. 151. (a) The Commissioner shall provide for independent evaluations which describe and measure the impact of programs and projects assisted under this title. Such evaluations may be provided by contract or other arrangements, and all such evaluations shall be made by competent and independent persons, and shall include, whenever possible, opinions obtained from program or project participants about the strengths and weaknesses of such programs or projects.

"(b) The Commissioner shall develop and publish standards for evaluation of program or project effectiveness in achieving the objectives of this title.

"(c) The Commissioner shall, where appropriate, consult with State agencies in order to provide for jointly sponsored objective evaluation studies of programs and projects assisted under this title within a State.

"(d) The Commissioner shall provide to State educational agencies, models for evaluations of all programs conducted under this title, for their use in carrying out their functions under section 142(a), which shall include uniform procedures and criteria to be utilized by local educational agencies, as well as by the State agency in the evaluation of such programs.

"(e) The Commissioner shall provide such technical and other assistance as may be necessary to State educational agencies to enable them to assist local educational agencies in the development and application of a systematic evaluation of programs in accordance with the models developed by the Commissioner.

"(f) The models developed by the Commissioner shall specify objective criteria which shall be utilized in the evaluation of all programs and shall outline techniques (such as longitudinal studies of children involved in such programs) and methodology (such as the use of tests which yield comparable results) for producing data which are comparable on a statewide and nationwide basis.

"(g) The Commissioner shall make a report to the respective committees of the Congress having legislative jurisdiction over programs authorized by this title and the respective Committee on Appropriations concerning his progress in carrying out this section

not later than February 1, 1975, and thereafter he shall report to such committees no later than February 1 of each calendar year the results of the evaluations of programs and projects required under this section, which shall be comprehensive and detailed, as up-to-date as possible, and based to the maximum extent possible on objective measurements, together with any other related findings and evaluations, and his recommendations with respect to legislation.

"(h) The Commissioner shall also develop a system for the gathering and dissemination of results of evaluations and for the identification of exemplary programs and projects, and for the dissemination of information concerning such programs and projects or such elements thereof to State and local educational agencies responsible for the design and conduct of programs and projects under this title, and to the education profession and the general public.

"(i) The Commissioner is authorized, out of funds appropriated to carry out this title in any fiscal year, to expend such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section, but not to exceed one-half of 1 per centum of the amount appropriated for such program, of which $5,000,000 for each fiscal year ending prior to October 1, 1977, shall be available only for the surveys and studies authorized by section 821 of the Education Amendments of 1974. In carrying out the provisions of this section, the Commissioner shall place priority on assisting States and local educational agencies to conduct evaluations and shall, only

as funds are available after fulfilling that purpose, seek to conduct any national evaluations of the program."

Given the above language and the already cited background of the enactment of Section 151, it was therefore quite surprising when the Office of Education submitted its first plan for Section 151 which proposed that some two-thirds of the funds be allocated to a national longitudinal study covering seven years and costing $25 million. Critics of that proposal pointed out that the emphasis on a single national study would consume so much money that very little would be left to upgrade the evaluation capabilities of state and local districts. Further, the critics pointed out that since the evaluation study would take seven years, it was almost certain that Title I would undergo one, or perhaps two, substantive legislative changes during that period of time which would undoubtedly cloud, if not destroy, the validity of the longitudinal evaluation.

After a protracted period of negotiation between the Office of Education and the concerned congressional committees, the Office of Education redesigned its plan for the expenditure of funds under Section 151 and received at least tacit approval from the Congress that the new plan was acceptable. Reps. Carl Perkins and Albert Quie were most heavily involved in seeing these changes in Section 151 through to the end.

At one point during that time I had the occasion to chat with then former Rep. Veysey who was serving as Assistant Secretary of the Army and explained to him OE's handling of Section 151. As the author of that provision he concurred with the judgments of Reps. Perkins and Quie that he had not intended that a longitudinal study should be the focus of Section 151 and that the strengthening of state and local

evaluation capabilities and the gathering of comparable data were his greatest concerns when he authored that section of the law.

During the negotiations for the redesign of Section 151 one of the items pointed out by various Members of Congress and their staffs was the need to fulfill the mandate to develop models which would assist state and local districts in evaluating Title I. Again, this emphasis was based upon the experience of Members and staff during the 1973 and 1974 reauthorization efforts when it was discovered that very little information was available and that, for the most part, districts were left entirely on their own as to the development of effective evaluation practices, even though the Title I application required that districts evaluate the Title I program each year. As a result of these activities and OE's agreement to redesign the implementation of Section 151, the Regional Technical Assistance Centers were created, and OE requested proposals for the development of the evaluation models which are the subject of the symposium. Regrettably, it is much too early to determine whether information gathered and available as a result of the models will be of assistance to the Congress. (It should be noted here that in his Floor remarks on March 26, 1974, Rep. Veysey assumed that by this time three sets of data would have already been available. I can imagine his consternation if he were to find out that four years after that date we are still waiting for even the first piece of data from the models.)

It is also instructive to look back at the early reports of the Office of Education on the implementation of the Title I evaluation requirements contained in Section 151. The first report, dated January 31, 1975, does not contain any mention of the evaluation models until page 13

of a 16-page report. Even at that point the reference in item no. 9 is to a survey of technical assistance needs and a field test of the proposed state Title I reporting models. By the time the 1977 report on the implementation of Section 151 was transmitted last July, we find that virtually two-thirds of that 14-page report is devoted to the Title I evaluation models. Clearly, dialogue with the Congress in the intervening years had had a marked effect on changing the Office of Education's attitude towards the section of the Veysey amendment mandating the development of evaluation models by the Commissioner.

In the past two years or so I have heard a great deal of comment and discussion from any number of people with respect to the technical feasibility and technical problems created by the RMC models. Arguments have ranged from such issues as the development of the new metric contained in the models to the lack of an emphasis on longitudinal evaluations. Although all of those points are valid and raise issues of general concern, it must be remembered that the Congress is generally not concerned with the technicalities in the development of evaluations. What the Congress wants is information upon which to base policy and political judgments about programs. The primary concern of the Congress is that the information that is produced can withstand a professional critique and that the data will produce findings which are at least somewhat conclusive.

A number of academicians have charged that the Congress is not affected by data or program information. The belief here is that no matter what information is produced the Congress will essentially ignore it in making decisions with respect to programs--that these decisions

are essentially political and are rarely based on data or policy consideration. Although there is an element of truth in these charges, it should also be noted that data and good solid information can have an enormous impact on what Congress does. One example would be the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. Those amendments substantially restructured many portions of the Vocational Education Act. A good deal of that restructuring can be traced directly to a highly critical General Accounting Office study released early in that year which contains some very helpful and specific data.

More recently the attention of Congress with respect to the reenactment of Title I has been focused to a remarkably large degree by information generated by the study undertaken by the National Institute of Education in response to Section 821 of the Education Amendments of 1974.

The NIE study of compensatory education came about as a result of concern over lack of data and because of the pressures of Rep. Quie to provide us some sort of a test of alternative allocations of Title I funds. The language for Section 821 essentially emerged from the House side and was modified somewhat in conference committee.

"STUDY OF PURPOSES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF
COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

"Sec. 821. (a) In addition to the other authorities, responsibilities and duties conferred upon the National Institute of Education (hereinafter referred to as the 'Institute') by section 405 of the General Education Provisions Act and notwithstanding the second sentence of subsection (b)(1) of such section 405, the

Institute shall undertake a thorough evaluation and study of compensatory education programs, including such programs conducted by States and such programs conducted under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Such study shall include--

"(1) an examination of the fundamental purposes of such programs, and the effectiveness of such program in attaining such purposes;

"(2) an analysis of means to identify accurately the children who have the greatest need for such programs, in keeping with the fundamental purposes thereof;

"(3) an analysis of the effectiveness of methods and procedures for meeting the educational needs of children, including the use of individualized written educational plans for children, and programs for training the teachers of children;

"(4) an exploration of alternative methods, including the use of procedures to assess educational disadvantage, for distributing funds under such programs to States, to State educational agencies, and to local educational agencies in an equitable and efficient manner, which will accurately reflect current conditions and insure that such funds reach the areas of greatest current need and are effectively used for such areas;

"(5) not more than 20 experimental programs, which shall be reasonably geographically representative, to be administered by the Institute, in cases where the Institute determines that such experimental programs are necessary

to carry out the purposes of clauses (1) through (4), and the Commissioner of Education is authorized, notwithstanding any provision of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, at the request of the Institute, to approve the use of grants which educational agencies are eligible to receive under such title I (in cases where the agency eligible for such grant agrees to such use) in order to carry out such experimental programs; and

"(6) findings and recommendations, including recommendations for changes in such title I or for new legislation, with respect to the matters studied under clauses (1) through (5).

"(b) The National Advisory Council on the Education of Disadvantaged Children shall advise the Institute with respect to the design and execution of such study. The Commissioner of Education shall obtain and transmit to the Institute such information as it shall request with respect to programs carried out under title I of the Act.

"(c) The Institute shall make interim reports to the President and to the Congress not later than December 31, 1976, and September 30, 1977, and shall make a final report thereto no later than September 30, 1978, on the result of its study conducted under this section.

"Any other provisions of law, rule, or regulation to the contrary notwithstanding, such reports shall not be submitted

to any review outside of the Institute before their transmittal to the Congress, but the President and the Commissioner of Education may make to the Congress such recommendations with respect to the contents of the reports as each may deem appropriate.

"(d) Sums made available pursuant to section 151(i) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 shall be available to carry out the provisions of this section.

"(e) (1) The Institute shall submit to the Congress, within one hundred and twenty days after the date of the enactment of this Act, a plan for its study to be conducted under this section. The Institute shall have such plan delivered to both Houses on the same day and to each House while it is in session. The Institute shall not commence such study until the first day after the close of the first period of thirty calendar days of continuous session of Congress after the date of the delivery of such plan to the Congress.

"(2) For purposes of paragraph (1)--

(A) continuity of session is broken only by an adjuournment of Congress sine die; and

(B) the days on which either House is not in session because of an adjournment of more than three days to a day certain are excluded in the computation of the thirty-day period."

Perhaps the most beneficial element in designing Section 821 was the guarantee of alternative funding for this section by tieing it to

the evaluation set-aside established in Section 151. Because of this the NIE study was guaranteed full funding of $15 million over a three-year period.

The NIE study has been remarkable in the quality and quantity of information which has been produced. A half dozen major reports have come out of the study as well as numerous smaller papers which have been submitted to congressional committees as a result of specific inquiries on such issues as the problem of following the Title I child in a desegregation situation.

One of the more specific products to emerge from that study was the production of a substantial revision and reorganization of the Title I statute which was introduced early in the second session of the 95th Congress by Reps. Perkins and Quie (H.R. 10891 and H.R. 10931). If this reorganization of the statute is adopted, the result will be a much clearer and much more lucid law and one which will solve many of the procedural problems created in the '65 Act.

At this point it is probably safe to speculate that the NIE study will be the single most productive piece of evaluation work ever undertaken on a Federal education program. It may well be the most productive evaluation work of any executive branch agency.

The point of all this is that evaluations can be remarkably successful and have a decided impact on the actions of Congress. Of course, it comes as no surprise that those evaluations which are most valuable and are apt to be taken into account most frequently are those where the Congress has been involved in the design of the study. Section 151 meets that test in general although the RMC models, by nature of

their specificity, do not necessarily meet this test. The nature of the information which will come from the RMC models is certain to have an impact on the actions of future Congresses in the design of Title I. More importantly, however, from the viewpoint of the author of the amendment and those who are involved with Title I legislation in Congress, is the impact which that evaluation information should have on the operation of Title I programs at the local and state level.

In the final analysis, if the models are even 50 percent effective in bringing to the attention of school officials and parents the successes and failures in Title I programs, the investment in the models and the implementation of Section 151 will have been repaid many times over.